



John H. Chafee

**BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY**

National Heritage Corridor Commission



**For immediate release  
May 10, 2007**

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## **Restoration of Historic Canal Gates Underway at Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park**

**UXBRIDGE** – Three historic water-control structures at the Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park in Uxbridge are being restored through a partnership between the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, with funding assistance from the Office of Public Private Partnerships in the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. The gates, which have not been operated for 20 years, will be made functional so they can once again control the flow of water through the canal. This will result in better water circulation, a greater ability to respond to high-water events, and opportunities to educate the public about the operation of the Blackstone Canal as a historic transportation route and, later, as a source of waterpower for nearby mills.

“The restoration of the canal gates is an important part of DCR’s ongoing commitment to the enhancement of the Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park,” said Priscilla Geigis, Acting Commissioner of DCR. “This project complements the park’s visitor center, exhibits, and interpretive programs, and speaks to the strong partnership between the DCR and the Blackstone Heritage Corridor.”

The project is being funded with \$238,000 from the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, which was matched with \$238,000 from EOEEA’s Office of Public Private Partnerships, and \$91,000 from DCR, for a total of \$567,000.

“It’s always an exciting opportunity to provide matching funds for projects that restore DCR’s cultural and natural resources,” said Betsy Shure Gross, director of the Office of Public Private Partnerships.

“The Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park tells important aspects of the Blackstone Valley story,” said Thomas E. Ross, Acting Executive Director of the Blackstone River Valley

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National Heritage Corridor. “The Blackstone Canal had an enormous impact on the Valley’s landscape, helping to advance the Industrial Revolution throughout the region. The restoration of the gates will deepen visitors’ understanding of the canal.”

The Blackstone Canal was built between 1824 and 1828, linking the city of Worcester with Providence, R.I. It operated into the 1840s, when railroads began to offer a faster and less expensive means of transportation. Segments of the canal trench, tow path, locks, and other related resources survive in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island. The Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park contains one of the best-preserved segments of the Blackstone Canal and tow path, and is a popular destination for visitors.

According to Park Supervisor Francis Deary, “Visitors to the park this spring and summer will be able to see this exciting work move forward. The majority of the tow path will remain open for the duration of the project and, when the project is complete, visitors will be able to enjoy the newly restored gates.”

Restoration of the water control structures involves lowering the water level in the canal so the gates can be disassembled and their metal components repaired and/or recast off-site. Deteriorated concrete will be patched, masonry will be repaired, and all the timber components will be replaced. Great care is being taken to ensure that the restored gates will be both functional and historically accurate, and to protect endangered species within the project area. The project is expected to be completed this summer.

The work is based on a conditions analysis by Fuss & O’Neill of West Springfield, who also prepared the construction documents. The \$567,000 construction contract has been awarded to New England Infrastructure of Upton.

For more information about the Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park, visit [mass.gov/dcr/parks/central/blst.htm](http://mass.gov/dcr/parks/central/blst.htm)

For information about the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, visit [nps.gov/blac](http://nps.gov/blac).

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